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Provinces 'failed to support seniors,' Trudeau says following release of troubling new pandemic study

New study shows percentage of Canada's pandemic deaths in long-term care higher than OECD average

[Catharine Tunney](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jun 25, 2020 1:17 PM ET | Last Updated: June 25, 2020



Members of the Canadian Armed Forces prepare to enter Woodbridge Vista Care Community, a long-term care home, in Vaughan, Ont. A new study finds the proportion of Canadian COVID-19 deaths that have occurred in long-term care facilities is about twice the average of rates from other developed countries. (CBC)

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau today floated the idea of bringing in national standards and reopening the Canada Health Act to address some of the vulnerabilities the pandemic has exposed in long-term care homes — while accusing provincial governments of having "failed to support seniors."

His comments came after the Canadian Institute for Health Information released a new report that found the percentage of Canada's COVID-19 deaths taking place in long-term care facilities is about double the average of other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

As of May 25, long-term care residents made up 81 per cent of all reported COVID-19 deaths in Canada; the average percentage of COVID-19 deaths taking place in LTC facilities in 16 other OECD countries was 42 per cent.

The figures cited by the report are percentages of individual countries' total COVID-19 death counts as of May 25 — so countries with much higher death tolls also saw more deaths inside their long-term care facilities than did Canada.

Spain, for example, saw a lower percentage of its pandemic deaths in long-term care than Canada did — but because Spain's total death toll up to May 25 was much higher (26,834 to Canada's 6,566), its number of pandemic deaths in long-term care was much higher as well (17,730 to Canada's 5,324).

Watch: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the pandemic's impact on long-term care





Trudeau says the pandemic revealed serious problems in Canadian long term care homes

1 year ago | 2:11

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke with reporters after the OECD published a report showing that Canadian LTC homes had double the fatality rate of other countries surveyed. 2:11

"I think one of the things that is very clear is our current system of supporting seniors across this country has not worked," said Trudeau during a news conference outside of his home at Rideau Cottage in Ottawa this morning.

"It is a provincial responsibility. So it is them that ... have failed to support our seniors ... What this recent report has shown, and quite frankly what this pandemic has shown from the very beginning, is that the job isn't being adequately done in long-term care centres across the country."

- [Canada's proportion of COVID-19 deaths in long-term care double the average of other countries, study shows](#)
- [Demands grow for national, universal long-term care in response to pandemic](#)

Long-term care homes fall under provincial jurisdiction, but the prime minister said the federal government is willing to work with the provinces to address the problems in long-term care. More than 8,400 Canadians had died of COVID-19 as of June 24.

"We will continue to work with the premiers on ensuring that our long-term care centres are properly supported, whether that's by bringing in national standards, whether that's by extra funding, whether that's by looking at the Canada Health Act," Trudeau said, referring to the federal legislation that sets criteria for health transfers.

"There are a range of things that we can do."

WATCH / Report underscores Canada's long-term care failures during pandemic:



Report underscores Canada's long-term care failures during pandemic

1 year ago | 1:58

A new report underscores Canada's failures in long-term care during the COVID-19 pandemic when compared to other countries, and what could have been done to protect and save lives. More than 80 per cent of Canada's COVID-19 deaths have been linked to long-term care. 1:58

The issue likely will be raised this evening during the weekly call between the prime minister and the premiers.

The new CIHI study highlights the discrepancies between provinces and territories, showing long-term care deaths represented more than 70 per cent of all COVID-19 deaths in Quebec, Ontario and Alberta and 97 per cent of all deaths in Nova Scotia.

At the time the study was conducted, no deaths in long-term care facilities had been reported in Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and the territories. Two long-term care residents have since died in New Brunswick.

Ottawa's offer comes as calls multiply for a national response to chronic problems in long-term care homes.

With files from Kathleen Harris



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